

JUNE 2020

NICE ONE!

**WELLINGTON FREE AMBULANCE
THE ONES WHO ARE HERE FOR YOU**



**OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19
INTERN GRADUATE HAMISH
CO-RESPONSE TRIAL IN WELLINGTON**



**WELLINGTON
FREE AMBULANCE**
kia ora te tangata

We are the ones. 111

stryker

**Mike Grant**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
WELLINGTON FREE AMBULANCE

Kia ora koutou katoa, welcome to you, our friends and supporters.

As an emergency ambulance service we are committed to getting the right help, to the right people, in the best possible time. However, I am also aware this year has been unsettling for many of us. Everyone will have been impacted by COVID-19 with challenges and difficulties we could never have predicted. The added concern COVID-19 has caused will

differ from person to person, but it's encouraging to know we're in this together and Wellington Free Ambulance will remain here for you and your whānau when you need us most.

If you have concerns about your health or the health of others, be sure to get assessed and don't leave it until you're really sick. Please don't be worried about calling 111 for help if you need it. We'll work with you to ensure the best care, in the best way, and will take every precaution to ensure you stay safe.

As we look at the different ways we can help you, we introduce you to Mike on page 4, one of our First Responders at Riversdale in Wairarapa. Mike and the other First Responders are there for you in remote communities until our crews can arrive.

Heidi on page 6, works as a Clinical Paramedic Advisor in the 111 Clinical Communications Centre. Her focus is on ensuring patients are supported and looked after over the phone, understanding what is happening for them and ensuring they get the best help.

At the beginning of March we partnered with Wellington District Police and CCDHB to better respond to mental health emergencies in Wellington city. Chris is our paramedic on the team, read more from her on page 7.

Being here for you isn't always an ambulance response, but care and compassion are fundamental to how we work and this will never change.

Ngā manaakitanga

STAYING WELL

Medical Directors Dr Andy Swain and Dr Dave O'Byrne say it's important to look after yourself and keep well to avoid getting sick over winter.

If you feel unwell and need our help, don't be worried about calling 111. We'll work with you to ensure the best care, in the best way, and will take every precaution to ensure you stay safe from viruses such as COVID-19 and flu.

"We want to help people stay safe and well, and we're here if you need us," Andy explains.

With that, here are Andy and Dave's top tips for staying well over the next few months.

One of the best ways to help protect yourself and your whānau from viruses such as COVID-19 and

flu is to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water and dry them thoroughly.

Get immunised and try to avoid touching your face and make sure you cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue.

Stay warm, try to keep your house dry and well ventilated and wrap up when you go outside.

If you're feeling unwell keep away from others. Stay home and rest to help reduce the spread of illness, particularly to those who are more vulnerable to infection.



"We can help in lots of ways. When you call 111 our call takers will ask you questions to work out what's going on. Depending on your symptoms one of our paramedic advisors might call you back and help you over the phone, or we might send an ambulance crew to come and see you at home," Andy says.

We will continue to be here for you when you need us most and will do everything we can to support you over the coming months.

Look after yourself and each other out there.



A CALL FOR HELP IS A CALL FOR HELP

Our paramedics understand that minutes matter in an emergency. This quick and responsive action is what helps save so many lives across our region – including 75-year-old Mike from Masterton.

Mike was incredibly pale when his wife, Glenys, found him. She asked if he was ok but Mike didn't reply. Instead, Mike let out an awful groan and collapsed. He was having a cardiac arrest.

"It all happened so fast. I remember catching him and getting him onto the floor, then dialling 111 and starting CPR. It was the scariest moment of my life. I didn't know what to think in that moment. I just knew that this was serious and made sure the ambulance was on its way," Glenys says.

Paramedics Hannah, Caren, Andre and Sharon turned up a few minutes later. Fortunately everyone was at Masterton station as they were preparing for the night shift.

CPR can be exhausting, but with her husband's life in her hands, Glenys carried on with all the energy she had.

Paramedic Hannah explains that bystander CPR is huge when it comes to a person's chance of survival. "It's as if all the small things had been taken care of which meant we could be patient focused right from the beginning," Hannah says.

Everyone in the room knew they needed to get Mike's heart beating as soon as possible... his life was in their hands.

The team managed to shock Mike's heart only for it to stop seconds later.

Again and again they would shock Mike's heart but it would not regain a healthy rhythm. But they didn't give up.

Finally after 10 minutes of CPR and another shock, Mike's heart began to beat for itself. He was then transported to hospital via air ambulance.

The next thing Mike remembers was waking up in Wellington Regional Hospital. He had no recollection of what had happened to him.

"It is a reality check and just goes to show you don't know what's around the corner. All I can say is thank you; to my wife, Wellington Free, everyone. Thank you for saving my life."



RESPONDERS IN OUR REMOTE COMMUNITIES

When you need help in remote parts of the region, our community first responders can sometimes be the first to get to you.

They're key to getting life-saving treatment underway until an ambulance can arrive.

Mike is a First Responder at Riversdale in Wairarapa – he is also a farmer and a local lifeguard for Surf Life Saving NZ.

Over the years he's responded to many incidents, and believes first responders are particularly important to Wairarapa communities due to how remote some areas could be.

"THE BEST THING IS BEING ABLE TO GIVE PATIENTS MORE PROMPT ATTENTION THAN WOULD OTHERWISE BE THE CASE. I THINK WHEN WE ARRIVE IT IS A COMFORT TO THE PATIENT AND THEIR FAMILY," MIKE EXPLAINS.

For First Responders, it is all about a quick response.

"We help initially stabilise the patient and provide a situation update so the paramedics have a more accurate description of the patient's condition."

Mike says he understands the value this support brings to his community and will continue to provide help whenever he is needed.

Though First Responders only receive a handful of call outs every year. These can be anything from car accidents to cardiac arrests. Mike is one of 10 First Responders across the region, with others in Ohariu Valley, Whitemans Valley, Martinborough and Waikanae ready to help when the call comes in. We're thankful for all our First Responders who are willing to be the ones here for you in remote communities.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO AFTER-HOURS AND URGENT HEALTHCARE FOR KĀPITI PATIENTS

Last year, Wellington Free, Tu Ora Compass Health and CCDHB, launched a new treatment pathway for Kāpiti residents. This has seen more than 270 patients receive funded treatment by a local GP instead going to hospital.

Lesley, was our 100th patient – needing our help for a serious nosebleed.

Frightened, she called for the nurse at Metlifecare Retirement Village where she lives, and they called 111. Like many Kāpiti residents, Lesley didn't really want to go all the way to Wellington so our paramedics suggested an alternative plan.

"I'm always very pleased with Wellington Free and have used them before – but this was great. They looked after me so well and it was nice to stay close to home."

Lesley was seen by a doctor at Team Medical who was able to treat her without an unnecessary trip to hospital.

"Our clinicians always assess and work with patients to determine the best medical treatment, but this service allows us to take a more collaborative approach," says Nathan, our Service Integration Manager. "Being closer to home and avoiding potential long waits in ED can make a big difference during what can be a really distressing time."



REASSURANCE FROM A FRIENDLY FACE

Our paramedics are committed to getting you the most appropriate and timely care when you need it most.

"It's a great honour knowing the difference we make in people's lives when they are in vulnerable situations, even if it is just reassuring them that everything is going to be okay," Paramedic Tim explains.

For Priyanka and her family, the first time they'd ever needed to call 111 came in April. Her husband, Parag, had severe pain in his right knee following his run the night before. But both Tim and his colleague Matt were there to help. "The reason was not very big but urgent help was required," Priyanka says.

On this occasion, all they needed was some advice and reassurance as Parag's injury happened during COVID-19 Alert Level 4.

"In our line of work it's always important to remember that non-life threatening emergencies are just as important as those more serious emergencies. For our patients this could be the first time they have ever called for an ambulance. But sometimes the advice, education or direction from a friendly face is all that someone needs," Tim says.



Priyanka is extremely thankful for the help they received from Tim and Matt. "It's good to know that there is someone out there to help when you need it the most and you have no extended family or help available close by," she says.



SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS ON SCENE AND OVER THE PHONE

From a young age, Heidi knew that she wanted to help people and work for the ambulance service – in her words she “couldn’t imagine doing anything else.”

Fast forward through a Bachelor’s degree and years of on-the-job-training, Heidi is a Paramedic and a Clinical Paramedic Advisor (CPA) in the 111 Clinical Communications Centre.

Though every day is different, Heidi must be on top of her game. In both roles her focus is on ensuring patients are well supported and looked after – the only difference is that one’s on scene, the other is over the phone.

“You have to be confident in your clinical knowledge and the skills you have because the decisions you make have a direct impact on people’s lives,” she says.

When Heidi is working as a CPA in the Clinical Communication Centre she’s there to call back, reassess, and re-triage if necessary, to ensure the best outcome for everyone involved.

Being a CPA gives Heidi the opportunity to support her colleagues on the road with secondary clinical guidance and support over the phone, as well as ensuring the best care plan for each individual patient.

“Crews can call to get extra information about a patient’s medical history, send an ECG for a second opinion or even ask for permission to provide interventions they normally cannot do.”

For Heidi, one of the highlights will always be using her clinical expertise to expertly care for her patients and her community.

**“I’VE BEEN AROUND
AMBULANCES AND
PARAMEDICS FOR YEARS.
IT’S BECOME MY LIFE;
THE PEOPLE I WORK WITH
HAVE BECOME MY FAMILY,”
HEIDI SAYS.**



CO-RESPONSE FOR MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES

In March, we partnered with Wellington District Police and Capital & Coast DHB to better respond to mental health emergencies in Wellington city.

Paramedic Chris is part of the new Co-Response Team that also includes a police officer and mental health clinician. The team will provide enhanced on-scene care to people in need of an emergency mental health response.

Over the years Chris has helped many patients in mental distress but paramedics are not experts in providing on-scene mental health support, which can result in a large number of people being unnecessarily transported to emergency departments or police stations.

“Often at scene we take over the care of the patient and deescalate the situation with our colleagues from Police. But working together and sharing information between us, Police and a mental health clinician has been incredibly valuable to provide better outcomes for our patients.”

Chris is extremely passionate about mental health and explains that being part of the team has been a fantastic opportunity to learn lots, increase her knowledge and make significant change.

“Working with the team has been fantastic and incredibly insightful to how we can work better together” says Chris.

BEST AND BIGGEST YEAR OF HIS LIFE

Graduate Intern Hamish is committed to becoming better so that he can continue to help his patients.

Both his confidence and skills have grown immensely since joining the team; enabling him to be a more present and greater help in his community.

“I knew Wellington Free was a great organisation to work for so to now be part of such a high-calibre team is definitely an incentive to keep learning. There’s always a job that I find interesting or want to learn more about so I can do better next time; the learning never stops,” Hamish says.

Hamish works with his preceptor and Extended Care Paramedic, Sam, who has been at Wellington Free since 2011.

Right now, Hamish is working on extending his experience on the road. “There’s only so much you can learn while volunteering or studying, so now that I have a fulltime mentor, I can actively work on specific skills and knowledge over time.”



Looking to make a difference in your community?
We’d love you to join us! Check out wfa.org.nz/vacancies to find out more.

STAY WELL THIS WINTER

With the onset of winter also comes illnesses so it is especially important to stay warm and stay well.

Follow these simple tips for winter wellness:



Eat well – eat a balanced diet of fresh fruit and vegetables, especially those containing vitamin C to help prevent coughs and colds.



Keep warm – ensure your home is warm, dry and well ventilated.



Keep hydrated – staying hydrated is really important, particularly if you have been exercising.



Wash hands regularly – wash hands with soap for at least 20 seconds and dry thoroughly.



Exercise – keep active with moderate exercise every day by walking, running or doing a workout.



Sleep well – good sleep helps support a healthy immune system.



Get vaccinated – make sure your flu immunisations are up to date.



Be mindful – keep in contact with friends and family regularly and engage in activities you enjoy.

STAYING IN TOUCH

We'd love to share your story with our readers.

If you've got something special to share write to: info@wfa.org.nz

For questions or feedback:
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